

1508/1056.

Mr. MILLECHAMP's
S E R M O N
A T
Glocester ASSIZE,
MARCH 25. 1705.

MR. WILLIAM

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GLOUCESTER ASSISE

MARCH 25. 1705.

Of Faith and a Good Conscience.

A
S E R M O N
Preach'd at *GLOCESTER*,
A T T H E
A S S I Z E

Held There by
Mr. Justice *GOLD*,
M A R C H 25. 1705.

By *Richard Millechamp*, M. A. and Rector of
Rudford in Gloucestershire.

Publiſh'd at the Deſire of the High Sheriff,
and Grand Jury.

L O N D O N:
Printed for *B. Cooke*, at the *Middle-Temple Gate*
in *Fleetſtreet.* M D C C V.

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Preach'd at C H E S T E R,
A T T H E
A S S I Z E S

Held There by

Mr. Justice G O L D,

M A R C H 25. 1709.

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Printed at the Office of the Signet Office
and Great Seal.

L O N D O N:
Printed for J. Cooke, at the Middle-Temple Gate
in Fleetstreet. M D C C V.

T O

Edmund Chamberlayne, Esq;
High Sheriff of the County of Gloucester;

A N D

To the Gentlemen of the Grand Jury,

George Lloyd, <i>Esq;</i> John Tracy, <i>Esq;</i> Lionel Rich, <i>Esq;</i> Henry Creswick, <i>Esq;</i> William Stoughton, <i>Esq;</i> Daniel Lysons, <i>Esq;</i> John Chamberlayne, <i>Esq;</i> Richard Morgan, <i>Esq;</i> Roynon Jones, <i>Esq;</i>	Edward Field, <i>Esq;</i> Thomas Veel, <i>Esq;</i> William Sambache, <i>Esq;</i> Edward Parker, <i>Gent.</i> William Sambache, <i>Gent.</i> David Hughes, <i>Gent.</i> Edward Hungerford, <i>Gent.</i> Charles Freeman, <i>Gent.</i> William Atwood, <i>Gent.</i>
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Gentlemen,

YOU have here in Print, what you (who heard it) were pleas'd to approve of from the Pulpit. Its Probity and Plain Dealing, I believe, brib'd the Judgments of the true Lovers of our Constitution; and as for others, I court their Applause as little as I care for their Principles: Though I must own, it seems strange, that a Man cannot say as much on

Epistle Dedicatory.

the side of our Constitution, which is justly reckon'd the Best in the World, as is every day said to support a Bad Cause, or in the behalf of a Malefactor, without being accounted Criminal, and gaz'd at as if he had sprung an Heresy, or removed the ancient Land-Marks. I know not what can be the meaning of this, except some People would persuade us, that 'tis dangerous to be honest; or that Iniquity does so much abound, that Probity, like some Phœnomena, becomes a Wonder for its seldom appearing. But he that will be thus Bugbear'd out of his Principles, or Scar'd from doing his Duty, has as little Wisdom as Courage, and deserves any other Character better than that of a Divine.

I might justly Apologize for the sudden thrusting of this Sermon into the World: But I shall only say, that I hope the Well-meaning of the Preacher will in some measure with honest Men, atone for the Errors of the Author; especially it ought with You, to whose Commands he has sacrific'd his Judgment, and is

Your most humble Servant,



R. Millechamp.

SERMON

Preach'd at

Glocester ASSIZE, &c.

1 TIM. I. 19.

Holding Faith, and a good Conscience; which some having put away, concerning Faith have made shipwrack.

THE Greek Scholiasts say, That *Timothy* received Imposition of Hands, when he was Ordained Bishop of *Ephesus* by *St. Paul*, not by Man's calling, but by Divine Revelation: That Prophecies went before of him, predicting his Qualifications, and the extraordinary Service which he should do the Church; which are refer'd to in the 18th Verse, where he saith, *According to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.*

*Chrysost.
Theod.
Occum.*

So

Lib. 4.
chap. 43.

So necessary to the planting and propagating of Christ's Church, was a well qualified Ministry, that in the Primitive Times the Holy Spirit pointed them out by some extraordinary Revelation; as in this Case, so also in the 13th of the *Acts* of the Apostles, and the 2^d Verse, the Holy Spirit said, *Separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.* This is what *Irenæus* calls *χρειονα veritatis certum*, when he says, That the Bishops who succeeded the Apostles, received, together with their Succession, certain Endowments or Gifts of Truth, according to the good Pleasure of the Father.

These were extraordinary Calls, Calls of the Spirit without a Metaphor; and such Calls, as they, who now-a-days pretend to 'em most, can lay the least claim to. *St. Paul* who had an irresistible Call, such a one as made it more impossible for him to resist it, than to *kick against the pricks*, yet found Prayer, Diligence, Caution, and Circumspection, highly necessary to carry on the Work of the Ministry, since he was to Fight against *spiritual wickedness*, to beat down the *strong holds of sin*, and to propagate that which should be to *Jews a stumbling-block*, and to the *Greeks foolishness*.

So strong were the Prejudices of Passion and Education, and the Effects of a mistaken Zeal, that he was reckon'd a Subverter of the Law, and consequently a Disturber of the Peace and Tranquility of the People, a Madman, and a setter forth of strange Gods, only because he Preach'd *Jesus* and the *Resurrection*.

This extraordinary Apostle, well knowing what Usage he had met with from a Stiffnecked and Perverse Generation, could see no Reason why his Son according to the



the Gospel, should expect better ; especially since he knew that many Hereticks and Perversers of the Faith were crept into the Church of *Ephesus* ; and therefore he solemnly chargeth him to stick close to the Business of his Calling, to be as firm as a Rock, and immoveable as a Mountain ; *Holding Faith and a good Conscience ; which some having put away, concerning Faith have made shipwrack.*

Now though the Words which I have here made Choice of, were a particular Charge given to the Governor of a Church , yet since we find that the Instance here given, *of erring concerning the Faith, and making shipwrack of a good Conscience*, is of Men of other Professions, as of *Hymenæus* and *Alexander* ; and we our selves are but too sensible, how apt we are to fall from our own Stedfastness, and to be led away with the Errors of the Wicked ; and that even a *Bishop* might not be above Temptations, as appears by the necessity of this Charge : That it may the more readily appear, how necessary it is, that Men in all Circumstances and Conditions of Life should hold a pure Faith and an undefil'd Conscience ; I hope it will not be thought improper to inculcate the Design of the Words given in Charge to *Timothy*, even to this *Congregation*.

Which I shall endeavour to do, by shewing,

I. What is meant by Faith.

II. What is meant by a Good Conscience. And

B

III.

III. How necessary it is that we preserve both *pure and undefiled*; or as it is here express'd, *That we make not a shipwrack of either.*

The word *Fides*, or Faith, hath very many Acceptations; with an enumeration of which, I shall not trouble this Audience, but shall only speak of it as it relates to our Spiritual Welfare, and the well regulating of Human Society.

Faith, as it is a Theological Grace, *Is a firm, constant, and effectual Assent of the whole Man, to those Promises made by God to Mankind in the Scriptures, and a serious Application of them to himself through the Merits of Christ.* I say a firm and effectual Assent, that I may distinguish it from that Faith spoken of by St. James, in the Second Chapter, 17th Verse; where he saith, *Faith if it hath not works is dead*: and in the 19th Verse, *Thou believest that there is one God, thou dost well, the Devils also believe and tremble.*

St. Austin observes, that there is great difference between *credere Deum, credere Deo, & credere in Deum*, Sermon. 181. *de Temp.* But Irenæus sums up all when he saith, *To believe, is to do as God will.*

Lib. 4. c. 14.
adver. Her.

I call it a Constant Assent, that I may make a difference between a Sincere Faith, and that mentioned in the Parable of the Seed which fell in stony Places, which as our Saviour himself expounds, is, *He that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it, yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; but when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended*, Matth. 13th. 20, 21. But the Faith here recommended,

mended, embraceth the whole Doctrine of the Gospel, and is productive of Good Works, and is described by St. Paul in 11th. Heb. ver. 1. to be the *confident expectation of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*; which Faith had such an Influence on his Life and Actions, that he resolved that *neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities and powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, should be able to separate him from the love of God which was in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

This was the Faith that animated the Apostles, and made them out-strip their natural Capacities, over-matched the Accomplishments acquired at the feet of Gamaliel, and furnish'd them with *Auxiliaries* sufficient for Success in the most difficult Attempts: This made them overlook the frowns of Fortune, as well as worldly Advantages; taught them to deal plainly and bare-fac'd even to those of *Cæsar's Household*, to the Court as well as the Cottage; and made them Powerful to give their Master the *Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.* Psal. 2. 8.

This Faith is not merely the effect of Reason and Speculation, but ingenerated in our Hearts by the miraculous Power of the *Spirit of God*. 'Tis true, in the Primitive Times, when the Church was in her Infancy, and the *harvest was plenteous, and the labourers but few*, and Providence was in a manner forced to convert People into the Ministry, that they might profelyte others; then 'twas necessary that a Ray of the Divinity (if I may so speak) should, as it were, dart down to enlighten the Breasts of Men. But now, since the Church is arrived to Maturity, and there are Successors of the

Apostles sufficient to preach the Word of God ; and the Word is nigh unto us, even in our Mouths, translated into our Mother Tongue, that he that runs may read it ; there is no Reason to expect such Supernatural Assistance, or compulsive Efforts of the Spirit ; but a sincere pious Endeavour, which exerts it self in Hearing, Reading, and Meditating, with the Assistance of God's Grace does the Work.

Therefore since now, ordinarily speaking, *Faith cometh by hearing*, how necessary to the acquiring thereof is it that we constantly repair to our *Establish'd Churches*, where God's Word is truly preach'd by a real *Ministry*, and the Sacraments duly Administred ? That we are fix'd and stedfast in this Faith, and not *Ignis Fatuus's* in Religion, blown about with every wind of Doctrine.

And here, I hope, it will not be thought improper, if I put you in mind of the Blessing which we enjoy, in being born where this *Faith* is Profess'd, and Baptiz'd into the *Communion* of a truly *Apostolic Church*.

How deplorable is the Case of those, who are envelop'd in worse than *Egyptian* Darkness ; who come into the World to be always ignorant of what every Man ought to know for his Soul's Health ; who have not so much as *heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*, to Purify their Hearts, and implant in them this Faith ? Whereas we seem design'd by Providence to be Inheritors of *Christ's Kingdom*, born with the Promises of the Gospel about us, and must naturally profess this *Faith*, except we are *Bastards* in Religion. With us, God's Veracity and written Word are the Ground of our Faith, and the Foundation of our Hope : Here the Scriptures are not
lock'd

lock'd up from the Use of the *Laity*, nor made the Property of the Crafty and Designing, who lead captive silly People; but are naked and unveil'd to every vulgar Eye; not to Comment and Expound upon according to their own *Caprice* or *Fancy*, (as in the late Times of Iniquity), but to Read and Meditate; and where they wade out of their Depth, they are exhorted to repair to their Spiritual Guides, to whom the *Keys* are committed; I mean the true Successors of the Apostles, the *Ministers of the Church of England*, who will not be tainted with *Enthusiastic Zeal*, but continue bright and shining Lights in the midst of a *crooked and perverse generation*. In short, nothing but the Excellency of our Faith could have produc'd so pure and undefil'd a Religion in practice, exactly conformable to its grand Pattern the Gospel; a Religion that gives demonstration that its Doctrine is of God, and ever since the *Reformation* has been counted her Glory, as well as her greatest Champion. A true Character of which, is given by that truly great *Prince* who understood it better than most, and suffered more for it than any; I mean King *Charles the Martyr*, who says, *I have try'd the Church of England, and after much Search and many Disputes, have concluded it to be the best in the World, not only in Community as Christian, but also in the special Notion as Reform'd, keeping the middle way between the Pomp of Superstitious Tyranny, and the Meanness of Fantastick Anarchy.*

ET CON BA-
ΣΙΑ.

2dly, Faith in the Civil Acceptation of the Word; (according to *Cicero*) is the performance of what
is

is said or promis'd; a conformity between our Words and Actions; provided still that we be *free Agents*, I mean that there be no Compulsion laid upon us, and that what we engage in be fair and lawful; otherwise we are punctual to our own Destruction, valuing our Words more than the good of our Souls, or that of the Community. This Faith, when fairly given and religiously kept, is the Cement of Human Society, the Basis or Foundation of all Justice, 'tis what oftentimes binds down the Men of *Honour* (falsly so call'd) when they scorn to be shackl'd by the Rules of Religion: Without this, Words would be quite insignificant, and we should never understand one anothers meanings; and therefore it was truly said, *Nec ulla res vehementius Rempublicam continet & vitam, sanctissimum humani pectoris bonum*; that there is nothing that sets such proper Boundaries to the Commonwealth and Life of Man, as this *Faith*; 'tis the most Sacred Good in the Breasts of Men. This is what the *Romans*, who had only the Light of Nature for their guide, generally preferr'd to the greatest Advantages: *Quibus tanta utilitate Fides antiquior fuit: With whom Faith was in far greater Esteem than much Profit*; says *Livy*.

A severe Reprimand to many of those who profess the Christian Faith, and yet like *Parrots* here in *England*, are first bought, and afterwards taught to speak, and are so transform'd by Places of Profit, that one would judge of them as the *Jews* thought of their Proselytes; to wit, That they were actuated by new Souls.

II. I come now in the Second Place, to shew, *What is meant by a Good Conscience.*

I shall not load your Patience with the many trite Divisions of Conscience, nor endeavour to play the Casuist, in shewing how far each of them may bind; since my Text obliges me to speak only of a Good Conscience, which is the effect of such a Faith as I have been before describing. Besides, the Word *Conscience* is oftentimes much abus'd, when 'tis yok'd with those Epithets, *Erroneous, Scrupulous, and Doubting*; which ought rather to be stil'd *Prejudice, Obstinacy, and Opinion*; or *Ignorance* either voluntary or involuntary, whereby we are kept from understanding the true intent and meaning of a Law: For to suppose a Man to have a doubting *Conscience*, which the most Rational Arguments cannot rectify, nor Divine and Human Law direct, is to put a Man under the Necessity of Sinning, which looks very like a Reflection upon the Author and Governor of the World.

I shall not here insist on the practical Dictates of Conscience, but treat of the Judicial part thereof, and shall therefore define a *good Conscience*, to be a *joyful and peaceful Recapitulation in the mind of man, of things done in conformity to the Law of God.* Conscience is an impartial Judge in the Breast of Man commission'd by God himself, which tries the nature of all our Actions, and if it condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God: Now Conscience presupposeth Law, as the strait Rule whereby the Rectitude or Obliquity of all our Actions is try'd.

The

The Law of Nature is the Rule to those who are without, and the Revealed Law to us, who are within the Pale of the Church. Take away Law, and there would be no such thing as Conscience; for I look upon the intrinsic Virtue or Turpitude of Actions antecedent to Law, to be a Notion too fine to be apprehended; and take away Conscience, and Law would be (speaking in respect to elicit Acts) a mere insignificant Precept.

The Law by some is defin'd, to be a *Decree by which a Sovereign obligeth a Subject to conform his Actions to what he prescribes*; so that all Law supposeth a Power in the Person Commanding, not only to dictate and prescribe, but also to inflict proper Punishments upon the Delinquent; and also an aptitude in the Subject to execute the Command. The Person of the Lawgiver ought in some measure to be made known to the Subject, and the Law ought of necessity to be promulg'd and made known to the Minds of those over whom it is design'd to have a Power; or else the *Decree* is insignificant, and nothing but a dead Letter: But when it is once thus promulg'd, it becomes strictly obliging, and the Subject is no longer left *ad libitum*, either to Obey, or to Refuse; there is no room for Deliberation and Debate, all Indifferency being taken away, the thing is then clad with Necessity, which commands a speedy Execution. Thus the Natural Law is made known to us, by the Spirit that speaketh in us, by the Dictates of right Reason, and afterwards by the Suggestions of Conscience, which is no other than the Voice of God proclaiming what we should Chuse, or what we should Refuse.

This

This is what the Apostle tells us, when speaking of those who had only the Light of Nature for their Guide; he says, *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them*; And in another place, *The Gentiles who have not the Law, do by Nature the things contain'd in the Law*; these having not a Law, are a Law unto themselves, which shew the work of the Law written in their hearts, their Conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another. This is a Volume which we always carry about us, and the Reason why it is not legible in every Individual, is through a natural Incapacity, a defect in the Organs, or an affected Ignorance or Sloth, where the Talent is not only laid up in a Napkin, but rusts in being buried in the Earth: Whereas those who endeavour the common good of Mankind, who are perfect in their Intellects, and exert the Powers of their Natural Faculties, and make due use of Right Reason, plainly discern the Law of Nature, and the conscientious Obligation they lye under to obey.

Now though this Law of Nature be very strong, and a Man must necessarily wound his Conscience when he acts contrary to the Injunctions thereof, yet was it not sufficient to curb the Appetites and Passions of Mankind; which made a good and gracious God condescend to give them his Revealed written Law, which should be a Light to them that sat in Darkness, and a Guide to conduct their Feet into the way of Peace.

A Law that derives Power to enforce, and Goodness sufficient to persuade.

Exod. 20. 18,
19.

*Duorum Testa-
mentorum dif-
ferentia timor
& amor. Aug.
cont. Adi-
mant.*

1 Tim. 1. 9.

The first Promulgation of this, was attended with the most terrible and affrighting Circumstances; it was proclaim'd by Peals of Thunder, and darted into their Breasts by Flashes of Lightning; so that the People feared exceedingly, and declar'd to *Moses*, That if they should hear the Voice of God any more in that terrible manner, they dreaded they should Dye. But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law: The Multitudes then drew nigh to the Mount with Joy and Gladness, where they received the most incomparable System of Divinity that ever enter'd the Ears of the Sons of Men. A Law fitted to the Capacities of Rational Beings, and consequently highly conducive to the good of Mankind: A Law that was no ways grievous to the true Subjects of the Sovereign of the World, for it was not made for the righteous, but for the ungodly, for sinners and profane.

The Heathens who had but a very blind Sense of a Deity, yet stil'd *Jupiter Optimus Maximus*, preferring his Goodness to his Greatness: But with how much better Reason should we *Christians*, who understand the Reveal'd Will of God, and are, as it were, admitted into the Secrets of Heaven, adore the Riches of his Goodness, who has made us but little lower than the Angels, and has given us a Law so suitable to our Natures? A Law that derives Power from its Author to enforce, and Goodness sufficient to persuade. It

com-

commands Veneration from us in the Reading, and lays Obligations on our Consciences whether we will or no.

But here, I know, it may be objected, That if the Law of God hath such Power to oblige our Consciences, and being like its Author *the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*, How comes it to pass that there are such Diversities of Opinion in Relation to Religion in the World? since this Law is the Guide to all Christian Churches, and therefore having the same Guide, they should all be led the same way.

To which I answer, That this proceeds from the Corruption of our Natures, from Vicious Habits, from Secular Interest, and from the Prejudices of Education; these by their force over-power Conscience, and baffle Reason.

Besides, different Men have different ways of Thinking; perhaps our Souls are not of the same size; even these *Stars* may differ from one another in glory; but let that be how it will, we know that our Souls exert themselves either dimly or brightly, according to the disposition of the Organs of the Body; some Peoples Bodies seem design'd as a Dungeon for their Souls, whilst other Souls regale themselves in Houses of Pleasure: some quickly discern Truth, though immur'd with Difficulties, and some stumble almost at a clear Demonstration. And when once People have imbib'd Notions, and communicated them to

the World, Pride then sets them a maintaining what they have thus rashly vented. Alas! so depraved is the Nature of Man, and so fond of embracing Novelty, that there has never any thing been broach'd, however absurd in its self, or pernicious in its Consequences, but what has found Patrons and Abettors: So productive is one Error of another (as this Nation too well knows), that *Rebellion* has been stil'd the *Cause of God*, and *Schism* the Dictates of a *tender Conscience*; and these Sins were generally accompanied (as 'tis no wonder) with final Impenitence, for they neither ask'd, nor found any place of Repentance.

Conf. betw.
Lords & Com.

But yet this Age seems to have gone farther, and to have more than fill'd up the Iniquities of their Fathers, when Men dare to charge (*absit impietas verbo*) our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, with a Practice that has been stil'd *Irreligious* and *Scandalous*, by the Two Grand Assemblies of the Nation. This looks like setting up Iniquity as a Law, making a Tool of Religion, and turning Faith into Faction; for all which, Reason is alledg'd, and Conscience vouch'd. But woe to them that call evil good, and good evil, who act according to the Suggestions of Satan, and their own perverse Humours; and then cry, *The Lord hath spoken it*, and therefore our Conscience must needs obey; whereas he has never requir'd any such thing at their hands; and has given them a Law to instruct them better. This Law is the only Rule of Conscience, which if Religiously fol-

follow'd, would destroy those nominal Distinctions, of *Tender*, *Doubtful*, and *Scrupulous*, which much better deserve the Name of *Phanatic Obstinacy*, and *Prejudicate Opinion*: For as King James the First says, *Conscience not ground'd upon sure Knowledge is either an ignorant Fantasy, or an arrogant Vanity.*

ΒΑΣΙΛ. ΔΩΡ.

Human Prudence, seeing how prone Man was to Err from this Rule, and that it was much easier to constrain the imperate Acts, than to lay Shackles on the Will, and that God did not always inflict Punishments in this World upon the Contemners of his Law; thought fit to add Civil Injunctions, the observation of which, should bring Praise, Pleasure, and Profit to the Subject, and the Breach thereof be attended with Pain and Disgrace. These commanding a Submission to 'em, by their intrinsic Goodness, and being once fix'd and publish'd by a due Authority, gain the Name of an *Establishment*; and enjoyning nothing but what is highly Serviceable to Morality and Religion, lay a Necessity on the Members of that Community to Obey whether they will or no; and those that do not, affront God, and abuse themselves and the World, and are no more actuated by a Good Conscience than they are by the Spirit of God, who hath told us, That *Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry*; and that those who *resist lawful Ordinances shall receive to themselves damnation.*

1 Sam. 15. 23.

How preposterous is it for Men to plead Conscience, when they refuse to obey in Matters which they

they call *Indifferent*, when they are made Necessary by Legal Injunctions? Will they call in the Gospel to encourage *Separation* from a truly Orthodox and Apostolic Church, which does so much encourage Unity in the Church, and Obedience to the State? How can they call that Conscience, that has no Divine Law to Support it; nay, indeed, has all the Artillery of Scripture drawn down against it? Do they not plainly shew, that *Interest* can dissolve this obstinate Opinion, falsely call'd *Conscience*, and suffer them to comply with us in that which, with unbrib'd Eyes, they have sometimes call'd little better than Idolatry?

This plainly shews, That had the *Government* Places of Trust, which by fresh Accumulations and a Series of Interest, should call for a daily Compliance in the highest Acts of our Religious Worship, they would Conform, not only throughout every Tittle of our *Liturgy*, but also throughout all Ages: There would be no need of Acts to compel *Uniformity*; and *Sanctions*, though not laid asleep, would be of little use; tender and weak Consciences would gain a due Elasticity, and the Friends of the *Low Church*, be brought to a Level with the *High*, by the Props of Preference.

But there are People, perhaps, whose Tempers are ruffled at the Name of an *Establishment*, and such will not allow that any sound Branch of the *Catholic Church*, Cemented into a Society, and Established by Laws, has Power (especially in conjunction with the Civil) to enjoin Terms
of

of Communion to those who are within that Jurisdiction. But let such People know, That any such Branch, is truly the Church in that place; and where her Commands and reiterated Injunctions are Disobey'd, our Saviour has told us what ought to be the Result of such Obstinacy; namely, *That they should be lookt upon as Heathens and Publicans.*

III. I am to shew how Necessary it is that we preserve Faith and a Good Conscience; which will appear especially in relation to Religion, without which no Nation can be Safe, nor People Happy. Faith is the Ground of all Religion; such as the Tree is, such is the Fruit; if our Thoughts are not fix'd upon their proper Object, or if they are wavering and uncertain about the true One, our Actions will sink us below the Character of Men; for they will want that steddiness and firmness of Resolution, which ought to be the result of Right Reason assisted with Revelation.

This Faith improves our Modes of Thinking, and exalts the Christian above the Philosopher; which appears by the *Civil Laws* of all Christian States, which wonderfully excel the most Studied *Schemes* of the Wisest Heathens. And even amongst those Countries whose Understandings are enlighten'd by the Sun-shine of the Gospel, those whose Faith hath been purest, have been governed by the best Laws; it being able to give Wisdom to the Simple, and to teach 'em how well worth the securest Mounds, so rich a Soil must

must needs be. And here I have sufficient room to expatiate on the Excellency of our *Constitution*, which as naturally flows from a well-grounded Faith, as the Effect does from the Cause: But I know to whom I speak, and therefore shall not pretend to light up my dim Taper to the Sun; but shall only say, That if this Faith be not kept inviolate, neither can our Religion be kept Pure and Undeiled; and if our Religion once grows Rusty, it will eat into the very Bones and Sinews of Government, and reduce Both into a ruin'd Heap: For the State in Relation to the Church, is like the Child in the Womb of its Mother, if the one be hurt, the other cannot totally plead Exemption.

There never was but one Scheme of Government that could claim its Original immediately from God, which was that of the *Jews*; and there we find, that there was such a vital Union betwixt Church and State, that when the Temple tumbled the Commonwealth fell.

2dly, Whatever Prerogative the Church of God heretofore had, when Priests were Princes and Governors of the People, it matters not now, since we have seen her Power sufficiently retrench'd; and her Wings clipt; and now to call her *High* in that respect, is to Mock God and Abuse Men; she has not Power, but in Conjunction with the State, even to correct those Impudent *Libels* that fly in her Face every Day; her Will indeed is good; but *she hath not strength to bring forth* And there-

therefore since the State seems to be the Bridle of the Church, we must desire those Worthy Persons who are intrusted with the Reins, to take Care of the Faith, the Faith of the Church of *England*, without which, the Superstructure must needs fall. It looks like a *Filial Duty* (notwithstanding the Jest of a late Advocate for *Occasional Conformity*) for a true Son to take care of his Aged Mother, and to recommend her to the Protection and Beneficence of those into whose hands she is, in a great measure, committed. This Care and Circumspection will ever be accounted Prudent, 'till the Axiom of *Aristophanes* be prov'd foolish; *ἡ ἐλάτεια σώζει πάντα*, *Caution preserves all Things*.

Notwithstanding that *Iniquity doth so much abound*, and the love of many waxeth cold, yet will the Care of Religion be always reckon'd the most valuable *Depositum* that can be committed to any one; and the greater the Trust is, the greater Care we ought to take in chusing our Guardians. We will not trust Knaves with our Estates, nor Atheists with our Consciences, nor take a Fool instead of a Physician for our Bodies; and shall we take less Care of that which makes us nightly related to God; gives us *an inheritance with the saints in light*; and assures us, That when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolv'd, we shall have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens?

2 Cor. 5. ch.
Verse 1.

And shall we take more care of Part than of the Whole, of a momentary Possession, than

of what (as we hope) shall last as long as the Sun and Moon endureth ; have a greater Regard for the Body Private than the Body Politic ? No, let us take care to *hold fast this Faith*, without which, our Constitution cannot be Strong, nor our Conversation Holy. Let us not part with one jot or one tittle of it to Men of craving Appetites and exorbitant Demands, who pretend to lick our *Constitution* into better Form, only that they may have opportunity to Devour. The unhappy Effects of Innovation and Change, one would think, should be too fresh in our Minds, to make us desire any thing which might conduce to the like Catastrophe ; but on the contrary, should teach us to *hold fast that Faith* which is the very Union of Society, and the *bond of peace*. That Faith which had such an influence on the Lives of our Ancestors, that it put 'em above vulgar Aims, made 'em lock up their earthly Affections, and pursue true Honour through the greatest Difficulties. This divested them of many of the Frailties incident to Men, and animated them with the Courage of Martyrs ; it turn'd Peasants into Heroes, and a *Prince* into a Star of the *first magnitude*. There's nothing that does more nourish the Nerves of Government, than *Unity in Faith* and *Conformity in Worship* ; nor nothing enervates it more than Diversity of Opinions ; even different Sentiments concerning the Civil Forms of Government, have been the occasion of irreconcilable Hatred. From hence arose that mortal grudge which was between the *Gracians* and

and the *Persians*; the First were Asserters of Democratical Government, whereas the *Persians* were steddily Maintainers of Monarchy; on this Account the Feud was carried so high, that the *Greeks* denounc'd a Curse against those who should desire Peace or Friendship with the *Persians*. An admirable Character of a Republican Principle!

Now if diversity of Opinions, in relation to Forms of Government, has been of such dangerous Consequence, what may be expected from Differences in Religion? Nothing kindles so soon as a Coal from the *Altar*, it rarely goes out 'till the *Pabulum* be consum'd; and like a Worm in a Book, eats up the Origin of its Being, and then expires in Irreligion and Anarchy. Whereas on the contrary, The Relation that ariseth from Faith, that dictates to our Reason, from Unity and Conformity in Principles, is the strongest Cement of Society, and is certainly to be preferr'd to all others, whether of Blood or Affinity, inasmuch as it hath, by far, a more noble Foundation. And therefore how unnatural is it, to see Men who pretend to be *Churchmen*, look strange upon the greatest Asserters of her Doctrine and Way of Worship, and stigmatize 'em with opprobrious Names; and amicably herd with the *Dissenters*, in all Places except the *Conventicle*, for which they are not yet quite ready?

It must be own'd that the Laws of our State are design'd for the Preservation of our

Church; and our *Hierarchy* is the best Support that the State can pretend to; and therefore how necessary is it to our present Preservation, that we hold fast the Faith of our Church, and continue firm to the Laws of our State? scorn compliance upon the bare account of Sanctions, and look upon our selves conscientiously oblig'd to obey the *preceptive* part of the Law.

That we do not just act our Part as this Day, and then suffer the Stage to be carried away, but that we *transmit it a glorious Church to all posterity*; which we cannot be well suppos'd to do, except we shew good Examples to those who are to come after, and will be very likely to act our Parts when we are gone. For it must be own'd, that upon the forming of Children to the Right Principles of Religion in this Age, very much depends the Happiness of the next; this Maxim *Aristotle* teaches us in his Politics, *That the best Laws can operate with no Success, unless the Subjects are well Train'd and Educated from their Youth.* And if so, what a blessed time may our Successors expect from such *Occasional*, nay, *Latitudinarian* Principles, as are now encourag'd, especially if it should not be their good Fortune (as I hope it always will) to be Govern'd by a Prince whose Heart's entirely *English*?

Lastly, in an Age where Parties and Divisions so much prevail, 'tis not so easy to preserve

serve *Faith* and a *Good Conscience*; and therefore as the Task is Difficult, our Care should be the greater. As those seem to be Prodigal of their *Constitution*, who will trust it by Vote, in the hands of those whose Principles are suspected; so truly a Man has some Reason to suspect his own Honesty, when he is set up by People who are not look'd on as its Friends.

There is an imperfect sort of *Stipulation* between the People reposing, and the Party receiving a Trust; which though not verbally express'd, is tacitly imply'd: And therefore he does not deserve the Character of a Wise Man, who receives such a *Depositum* from a *Party* or *Faction*; and I know what he deserves if he acts according to their Principles; for the Establish'd Laws ought to be his Guide, and not the Intentions and Designs of the *Factionous* and *Turbulent*. Let a Man stick close to these, and a Blind Man might count the Bows which he would have from any *Faction* of 'em all. This would be the way to keep our Constitution in Health, fortify the Nerves of Government, and prevent the Designs of *State-Quacks*; for relaxing of Laws, is in some measure unbracing of Government, and weakning its Power; and as Things fail in Power, so they will certainly sink in Respect.

And as the Parties receiving a Trust ought to be very Cautious that they preserve Faith and

2 Kings ch. 4.
v. 39.

and a Good Conscience, so ought the People conferring, where they lodge their well intended *Boon*; for if places of *Trust* and Honour, are fill'd up with Men of Mercenary Tempers and Prostituted Consciences, they will be just of as much Service to the Government, as the Wild Vine was in the Pot of the Prophets.

The *Licani* had a Law, That if any Man had lent Money to a Luxurious Person, he should Forfeit his *Loan*; but what ought they to Forfeit, who by Voices ill-plac'd, dangerously affect the Government in its most Sensible Part? They are either Faulty in their Judgments, or have made Shipwreck of their Faith and Good Conscience; and such, as Apostates, must expect to be hated by God and Good Men.

To conclude all, Let Conscience, which has the Law of God, and the Law of the Land for its Guide, rule and preside over all our Actions; this would stop the Mouths of Parties, and the Clamours of Divisions; make us a loving and happy People in the Walls of one Church: This would give Strength and Energy to the Laws, and at the same time make them almost useless, since they were not made for the Righteous; make Courts of Judicature as void of Throngs as are now some of our Churches; prevent many smart railing Declamations, and make Fees unfashionable: This would spoil the Charms of Gold, which gives



gives us such a dismal Prospect of the Depravity of our Natures; make Men as Innocent at Court, almost as they were in their Cradle; silence the Cries of the Orphan, Widow, and Oppressed; make the World a Stage of Love and Amity, for we should find as many Friends as we deserv'd; and at last bring us to the Haven where we would be, without any Fear or Danger of Shipwrack.

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